PUBLISHING CAREFULLY?

By Ant, (Ann) Luca and Maika.

Publishing means “to make something public or known”.[1] “The question is (...) how and why we are publishing something.”[2]

Our ***why*** is the launch of the first transversal design publication at the *I Never Read Bookfair* in June 2025. Through a collection of more than forty contributions from people circling around the *Institute for Experimental Design and Media Cultures*, we want to outline what the emerging field of *Transversal Design* might be.

Our ***how*** is this publication, and we want to use these first pages to explain how we chose to shape the process of publishing, or more specifically, how we designed and produced this book. For the three of us, designing transversally is designing thoughtfully, based on value and in acknowledgement of possible consequences. We quickly decided we wanted to make *The Most Sustainable Book in the World* (lol). Weighing all our choices carefully to have the least (or best possible) environmental/social/political/cultural/economic impact. We knew from the start that *The Most Sustainable Book in the World* is maybe something that would never exist. In the process, we kept being confronted with our ambivalences of the superlative, as well as of the term sustainability. As we were creating the introduction of the publication, our conversation always circled back to the term care. Caring for the planet but also caring for all the entities involved in or affected by our process. At this point, it felt rather right to aim for *Publishing Carefully.*

Care means thinking through and taking time. Time to think. Time to process. Time to adjust. Time to share. Time to be considerate. The following pages will guide you through our decision-making processes and explain further the ***how*** of this publication. By sharing our research, our findings, our approaches, we would like to encourage other people and publications to build on ours. Our framework is far from perfect, but we are more than happy if it can serve as a spark. In our paradigm of share and care, we invite you into our thoughts.

1. Duden

2. KUNCI – Rifki Akbar Pratama, Maria Uthe, incomplete guide to SUBVERSIVE-PUBLISHING-STRATEGIES, p.9

OUR PROCESS

As soon as we had decided on our concept and our proposal was supported by the whole publication group and the rest of the Master, we set up a code of work document to guide us. We made this document to hold each other accountable and to establish common ground of how we wanted to begin working together. It remains unfinished and open to additions or edits.

CODE OF WORK

- Eco-responsible browser and search engine
- No generative AI tools, as they use a lot of resources and enforce inequalities
- As open-source, local, ecological & ethical as possible
- Iterate quickly but share, stay open and ask for input (this means caring for other opinions and feedback and acknowledging our own biases and restrictions)
- Only walking, cycling or taking public transport
- As much green energy as possible

Firefox as browser, lilo/ ecosia as search engine

No Large Language Models, exceptions only for locally hosted tools

That’s Ant, (Ann) Luca and Maika.

Especially important was sharing our visions of and wishes for the publication.

Within the subgroups we were quite self-organised and different structures were developed & adjusted to the individual needs.

Aside from us, that’s Helena and Basia, responsible for coordination and Elena and Lea for editorial (although everyone can take over any tasks).

ALL THINGS META

At the beginning of the whole process of the publication we dived in too fast. On the one hand, because we were excited, on the other we felt the deadline looming. We initially forgot to put care first. It was our dear Elena (who is part of the editing team) and Tabea (who was part of our team for the first weeks) who interrupted us, reminding us to pause for a moment and find common ground. To be deliberate in how we want to care for each other. We took the time we needed, talked and shared.

From then on, we tried to have weekly meetings with the whole publication group and made sure that everybody is always updated. In these encounters we checked in with each other and our feelings, communicated capacities and made sure that no one felt excluded or overwhelmed. We tried to divide the tasks and subgroups (organisation, editorial and design/production) by our motivations, skills and wishes.

It was really nice to see and feel the care and reliability that grew in our publication group over the past few months. We will have to recap together to figure out what worked and didn’t when we hold the books in our hands.

These are the helping hands & minds who contributed along the way, thank you!!

Finding common ground

Elena & Tabea

Creative & technical thinking support

Anna, Kit, Lucie, Rasso, 2 Martin S., Lars H., Lars J., Lukas, Eileen, Lilo M., Lilo V., Nathalie

Reviewing this text

Lilo V. & Juliana

Fine tuning the layouted book

Lea

Selling us the matrix printer in Freiburg

Christian Paul

All the contributors whose amazing work made us stick to the actual realization of this book

Bed & food in Freiburg

Hannes

Mental support, giving kudos, reminding us when it’s too much & lending the cargobike

Olga

Our dearest Publication Team

Basia, Helena, Elena, Lea

Getting our first print out in Freiburg

Kathrin

Printing affairs

Volker from Merkurdruck, Michael from Citydruck, Sabine Weinert und Martin Eschle from april & tochter Druckerei

Cover/Paper-Making Workshop

Lilo M., Lea, Olga, Kathrin, Jules, Linus, Klara, Maddie, Hyperwerk homies (sieves), Maja

Everyone being & feeling involved <3

DESIGN

Initially, we were focused very much on environmental impact. We then decided to include political, social and economical consequences as additional factors. Even though we went away from the term sustainability toward care, these four factors still guided us. We came together once a week or every two weeks to make decisions. Often, rather than deciding we discovered gaps, redivided research tasks and rescheduled. These are the decisions we have made for the design of the publication:

FORMAT & LAYOUT

- DinA5 to waste as little paper as possible while still being comfortable to read
- Single column grid layout with side margin for footnotes, comments or more space for images
- Reduced white-space (prevent blank pages and keep the outer margins as small as possible)

COLORS

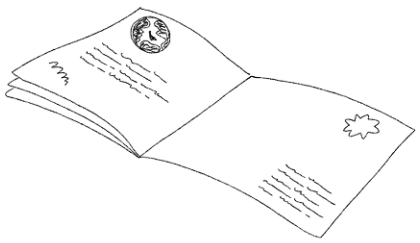
- No full black (we use different grey tones instead)
- Originally we wanted to use only b/w and dither all images

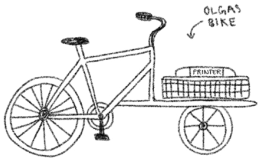
FONTS

- Body font ***Authentic Sans*** by Christina Janus and Desmond Wong
  > High-legibility, different weights for flexibility, licensed under WTFPL
  > *"the typeface aims to subvert the Eurocentric standards of typographic quality and refinement"*
- Comment font ***NotCourierSans*** by Open Source Publishing
  > For visual contrast
  > OSP uses exclusively free and OS softwares
- Our texts included a lot of glyphs or letters from different languages. We ended up hand-making a lot of them, or substituting them with other fonts (mostly Noto Sans, as it supports a lot of languages)
- Title fonts were hand-drawn by the authors of the pieces to emphasise the many unique positions that come together in the publication

COVER

- Deciding on a cover design was quite tricky and led to some heated discussions
- The map on the cover showcases all the texts and how they relate to each other and to the chapters
- Additionally we had a paper making workshop by Lilo M. where we created our own recycled paper colored with beetroot juice which wraps around the book as a sleeve





We actually transported the printer from Freiburg to Basel (70km) by cargobike.

It took a while to reach this quite obvious decision, as aesthetically we would have preferred other formats.

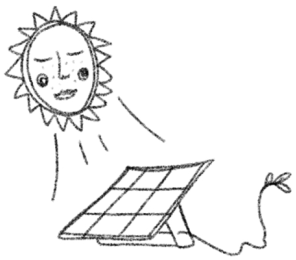
They work "sustainable and as resource-friendly as possible. We have been producing with green electricity almost from the start or have always used a lot of recycled paper. When it comes to our printing materials such as inks, lubricants and cleaning products, we pay attention to the best quality for the health of our employees and the environment."

Once we saw all the beautiful photographs and art pieces that people submitted we felt we couldn't go through with this fully.

We love open-source fonts! And also our budget was tight and we already had other ideas of how to spend it hehe.

"Do What the Fuck You Want to" Public License

OSP is a (super cool) collective who "questions the influence and affordance of digital tools through its practice of (commissioned) graphic design, pedagogy and applied research"



This was also due to some of the authors not agreeing to a full open-access hosting online due to the sensitive nature of some of the contributions

Fun & sharing our process

PRODUCTION

Production has been something we started thinking about from the beginning on and is really tightly interwoven with the design. It requires a lot of advance planning to be able to move slow and stay true to our concept (and also stay within the budget limit of 5000chf). We really wanted to make time and space to experiment and have fun with the limitations we set ourselves.

PRINTING

- Printing seperate parts of it on a matrix printer (from 1986!) and riso printer
  > for fun and for the imperfect aesthetic
  > to use obsolete tech and to see what we can learn from it, a challenge and a statement
- Printing the main part of the publication with the really sweet ***april & tochter Druckerei*** based in Freiburg (Germany)

BINDING

- Gluebinding
  > Type of glue: ***Dispersion glue***, a plastic-free alternative to Hotmelt
  > We would have preferred stitchbinding, but this is an expensive process
  > No staples as difficult to recycle

PAPER

- Recycled paper
  > Inside paper 90gr: ***Nautilus white*** and ***Vivus***
  > Outside sleeve: homemade recycled paper
- In the process we also thought about stone paper, hemp paper or apple paper, but this was one of the corners we cut and we just went for what ***april & tochter*** kindly researched, tested and ordered for us

DIGITAL PUBLICATION

- Solar-powered hosting is/was the dream!
- To consider: small file sizes for minimal storage and traffic, space for sound, video or other contributions, true e-pubs for accessibility
- The MA Team decided to showcase single articles on the new transversal design website made by the design studio of one of our students Ivan.

CHECKLIST

Alongside this text you will find our Caring Design Checklist as a continuation and evolution to create something tangible that you can build on.

Thank you for your interest. We are genuinely curious about any thoughts, criticism, questions and exchanges. You can reach us here: publication.transversaldesign.hgk@students.fhnw.ch